



## Community Colleges in Some States Offer 4-Year Degrees

The Illinois P-20 Council and Illinois Board of Higher Education in 2009 set a goal for 60% of Illinois adults to have at least a postsecondary certificate by 2025. Some states are trying to increase postsecondary educational opportunities by expanding the kinds of institutions that can offer bachelors’ degrees. At least 19 states authorize community colleges to confer limited types of bachelors’ degrees:

- |            |               |
|------------|---------------|
| California | New York      |
| Colorado   | North Dakota  |
| Delaware   | Ohio          |
| Florida    | Oklahoma      |
| Georgia    | Texas         |
| Hawaii     | Vermont       |
| Indiana    | Washington    |
| Michigan   | West Virginia |
| Nevada     | Wisconsin     |
| New Mexico |               |

There are now over 700 active bachelors’ programs at about 90 community colleges. These programs often reflect area workforce needs, and tend to be in a few applied or technical fields, such as nursing, automotive technology, and public safety management. Some (like one in forest resource management at a Washington community college) reflect area geography and natural resources.

### Arguments For and Against Community College 4-Year Programs

Supporters of offering bachelors’ degrees at community colleges say they:

- (1) Increase access to bachelors’ degrees among working adults, those with low incomes, racial minorities, and those living in rural areas.
- (2) Address workforce skills demands and gaps.
- (3) Save taxpayers and students money.
- (4) Build on community colleges’ expertise in applied and technical degrees.

Opponents counter that allowing community colleges to confer bachelors’ degrees could:

- (1) Erode the community college mission.
- (2) Duplicate university programs.
- (3) Cause costs and state aid to increase.
- (4) Face problems in achieving quality and accreditation.

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- (5) Be unnecessary due to the availability of online programs and bachelors' degree partnership agreements between universities and community colleges.

### Examples of Programs in Other States

Florida and Washington have the most bachelors' degree programs in community colleges. Only a small percentage of bachelors' degrees in those states come from community colleges, but they appear to pay off for those states and graduates.

#### *Florida*

A 2001 law authorized Florida community colleges to confer bachelors' degrees in limited fields. The programs must (1) be in high-demand fields, (2) get State Board of Education approval, and (3) gain accreditation.

No community college can terminate an associate's degree program because it offers a bachelor's program in the same field. Bachelors' degrees are only a small percentage of all community college degrees. In 2015-16 the Florida College System (which consists of 29 community and state colleges) awarded 115,908 degrees and certificates; only 7,491 (6%) were bachelors' degrees, compared to 57,779 Associate of Arts degrees and 35,249 vocational certificates.

In 2011-12, the full-time employment rate of that System's bachelors' graduates was 87%, versus 74% for bachelors' graduates of the Florida State University System. Florida College System bachelor graduates' average annual income was \$45,740, versus \$36,764 for Florida State University System bachelor graduates. This is partly because Florida College System students as a group are older, have more experience, and get bachelors' degrees in high-demand fields.

The Florida College System says that bachelors' programs at community colleges have saved students and taxpayers money compared to attending state universities—\$23 million from 2002 to 2014. (That figure was derived by comparing what students, and the state, would have paid if those students had gone to 4-year institutions instead.)

#### *Washington*

Washington Community Colleges have been authorized to offer applied bachelors' degrees since 2007. Before starting a bachelor's program, a community college must show need for it and get approval from the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges. The bachelors' programs are available to students who have earned associates' degrees.

In 2014-15, Washington's community and technical colleges had 138,279 full-time-equivalent

students, of whom 947 were in bachelors' programs. There were 35 such programs at 15 community colleges. The number of students graduating from the programs rose from 56 in 2010 to 246 in 2014.

### Illinois

Illinois does not authorize community colleges to confer 4-year degrees. Senate Bill 888 (Manar-Bush et al.) as amended by Senate Committee Amendment 1 (Manar) proposed to authorize up to 20 community college districts to offer bachelors' degrees in nursing. Amendments that were proposed, but not adopted, would have reduced the limit to 10 community college districts until 2022, and limited the number of students in the programs. A district would have to show that it has the resources, financial support, and interest to support a bachelor's program in nursing, and get State Board of Education approval. An evaluation and report on the programs by July 2022 would be required. The bill was re-referred to the Assignments Committee for lack of action by the deadline.

An Illinois Board of Higher Education spokeswoman stated that the IBHE opposed the bill, saying that it would bring a major change in the mission of the state's community colleges. An Illinois Community College Board spokesman said the ICCB supported it. □

*Ashley N. Musser*  
*Senior Research Associate*

# States Try Streamlining Adoption Process

About 112,000 U.S. children were awaiting adoption in mid-2015; 53,500 children were adopted in the U.S. that year. Adoption procedures are complex due to layers of state laws, some federal laws, and (for international adoptions) laws of other countries. Some states, including Illinois, are seeking to simplify or expedite adoptions and promote their success, while keeping needed safeguards. This article gives examples of such laws.

## Remove Restrictions on Who Can Adopt

A 2017 Illinois law said that a person's blindness may not be a reason for preventing the person from adopting a child. A 2015 Florida law removed a prohibition against homosexual people adopting children, and said that no one otherwise eligible to adopt may be prevented from doing so due to a desire to home-school the child.

## Waive Pre-Adoption Investigation Requirements

Under a 2015 Illinois law, the state may not impose any pre-adoption requirements on foreign adoptions governed by the federal Intercountry Adoption Universal Accreditation Act of 2012, and such adoptions no longer need Department of Children and Family Services approval. It

added that if adoptive parents show an immigrant visa or other evidence of foreign adoption, the court may not appoint a guardian *ad litem*, require termination of biological parents' rights, or require a home study.

Arizona in 2012 eliminated the requirement that the state study a prospective adoptive parent's suitability if the person is a close relative. A 2016 Arizona law expanded the list of those not subject to pre-adoption investigations to include more types of relatives of the child along with foster parents who seek to adopt a child living with them.

Under a 2016 Connecticut law, a person sharing parental responsibility for a child with a legal parent can adopt the child without an investigation, unless the court finds it necessary. A 2016 Nebraska law allows a court, on a showing of good cause, to waive an adoptive home study if the petitioner is a biological grandparent. The court can also waive the provision of a complete medical history of the child in such a case.

Under a 2015 Virginia law, the home study and meeting and counseling required of most adoptive parents can be waived if the prospective parents have had continuous physical and legal custody of the child for at least 5



years. Arkansas in 2015 raised the age above which a member of an adopting household must get a criminal background check from 18 to 18½.

## Waive Age or Residency Requirements

A 2014 Illinois law expanded the types of persons who are considered relatives of a child, and thus not subject to durational residency requirements like other adopters. It also permitted any adoption proceedings to be begun in any county, replacing more complex requirements.

Under a 2015 Nevada law, a court may waive the requirement that an adopting parent be at least 10 years older than the child if the adopting parent is a close relative and the court deems it in the child's best interest. The law also allowed a court to waive the requirement that a child live with the adoptive parents for 6 months before an adoption is finalized if the adopting parents are close relatives of the child. In 2017 Nevada eliminated the requirement

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# States Try Streamlining Adoption Process

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that anyone seeking to adopt a child in Nevada must have lived there at least 6 months.

A 2016 Arizona law allowed children not present in the state to be adopted, and adults not present in the state to adopt, if the child is under the jurisdiction of an Arizona court and other requirements are met. A 2017 Colorado law eliminated the requirement that a child be present in the state when an adoption petition is filed if the child has been under a Colorado court's jurisdiction for at least 6 months.

In 2014 Michigan shortened, from 6 months to 3 months, the time after a child under age 1 is placed with an adoptive family until an adoption can be finalized. A 2011 Arkansas law removed the requirement that a child reside in an adoptive home for at least 6 months before an adoption is finalized, if the child is a state ward.

## Increase Availability of Records

In 2017, Oklahoma shortened the time after which the state may disclose a child's medical and social history to a prospective adoptive parent who is not a relative, from 2 years after the child has lived in the prospective adoptive parent's home to 1 year.

A 2015 New Hampshire law authorized its Department of Health and Human Services to share the

status of a petition to terminate parental rights with a foster parent if the foster parent intends to adopt the child.

## Expedite Court Proceedings

A 2016 Arizona law authorizes county attorneys to draft petitions to terminate parent-child relationships and act as attorneys for prospective adoptive parents at their request. A 2016 Mississippi law bars objections to an adoption after a final judgment for adoption is entered and all parties have received proper notice. A 2016 Louisiana law allows a married blood relative grandparent to adopt a grandchild as the sole petitioner, if the adopter's spouse consents.

A 2015 Oregon law required any agency having custody of a child to file reports on the child with a court when it removes the child from a foster home to find another placement, but made the reporting requirement inapplicable if the placement is with an adopting parent.

In 2014, Mississippi authorized expedited proceedings for registering adoptions occurring in foreign countries.

A 2011 California law allowed a biological parent's written consent to adopt to be filed at the same time as the adoption request, rather than before. It also allowed children, in some circumstances, to be placed with

prospective adoptive parents without requiring the parents to be licensed foster care providers.

## Offer Post-Adoption Services

A 2015 Arkansas law required the state Department of Human Services to adopt rules ensuring that post-adoption services are provided to adoptive parents seeking the Department's assistance. Virginia in 2014 began requiring that a list of post-adoption services be provided to families when a replacement birth certificate is issued to an adopted child.

A 2015 Florida law required an adoption agency that places a child for adoption to contact the adoptive family, 1 year after adoption is finalized, to offer post-adoption services. □

*Sarah E. Barlow*  
*Senior Research Associate*

*“Be sure you put  
your feet in the  
right place, then  
stand firm.”*

*Abraham Lincoln*

[http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/abraham\\_lincoln](http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/authors/a/abraham_lincoln)

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# About the Legislative Research Unit

**Mission:** The Legislative Research Unit (LRU) was created in 1937 as the Illinois Legislative Council. Its statutory mission includes duties to “collect information concerning the government and general welfare of the State, examine the effects of constitutional provisions and previously enacted statutes, consider important issues of public policy and questions of state-wide interest, and perform research and provide information as may be requested by the members of the General Assembly ...”

**Staff:** The LRU staff includes persons trained in law or science, general researchers, and librarians to support their work. The researchers make extensive use of printed and online sources for information, and use their training and experience to understand and describe it accurately to legislators and staff.

**Work Products:** The LRU provides nonpartisan, objective, documented, and timely information. It has statutory authority to do research only for members of the General Assembly and their staffs. Major LRU publications available to the public are listed below. (Some are currently available only as PDF files at the Internet address cited below.)

- *Preface to Lawmaking*
- *Illinois Tax Handbook for Legislators*
- *Directory of Illinois State Officials*
- *1970 Illinois Constitution Annotated for Legislators*
- *Constituent Services Guide*
- *County Data Book*
- *Federal Funds to State Agencies*
- *Catalog of State Assistance to Local Governments*
- *Assistance for Illinois Businesses*
- *First Reading*—a quarterly newsletter with information of value to legislators.
- Booklets to help inform constituents about Illinois law, including *Laws for Youth*, *Laws for Older Adults*, *Consumer Laws*, *AIDS and the Law*, and *African American Men and Women of Science*.

The LRU also holds a training conference for newly elected legislators, and a conference for district office staff in each General Assembly.

**Emphasis:** The LRU’s work is nonpartisan, objective, and balanced. Its goals are quality, timeliness, relevance to the legislative process, and productivity. All its written research is carefully reviewed before being issued.

**Resources:** The LRU has its own library, special access to Illinois State Library materials, and subscriptions to many online databases. Its researchers often contact counterpart agencies in other states or national contacts, such as the National Conference of State Legislatures. They get information directly from its source whenever possible.

The LRU is located in Springfield near the State House. Its website is:

[www.ilga.gov/commission/lru/lru\\_home.html](http://www.ilga.gov/commission/lru/lru_home.html)

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# Abstracts of Reports Required to be Filed With General Assembly

The Legislative Research Unit staff is required to prepare abstracts of reports required to be filed with the General Assembly. Legislators may receive copies of entire reports by sending the enclosed form to the State Government Report Distribution Center at the Illinois State Library. Abstracts are published quarterly. Legislators who wish to receive them more often may contact the executive director.

## **Aging Dept.**

*Adult protective services annual report, FY 2016*

Program received 15,924 reports of abuse (up 1,066 from FY 2015), including 3,026 for persons with disabilities aged 18-59 (up 7.2% from FY 2015). Types reported (more than one can be alleged) were financial exploitation (8,290); emotional abuse (6,435); passive neglect (6,195); physical abuse (3,595); willful deprivation (2,140); confinement (1,273); and sexual abuse (764). Among alleged victims, 19% were disabled; 60% were 60-85; and 20% were 86 or older. The alleged abuser was a relative in 80% of cases. Department held 29th annual conference. A new online webinar series provided re-certification and continuing education. (320 ILCS 20/11; undated, rec'd Sept. 2017, 3 pp.)

## **Central Management Services Dept.**

*Disabled Hiring Initiatives report, FY 2017*

The 490 participants in Successful Disability Opportunities Program are eligible for over 170 state job titles. Agencies hired 50 persons with disabilities, including 22 through the program. Program faces challenges in increasing number of persons with disabilities hired due to continuing budgetary woes, limited hiring, absolute Veterans Preference, and number of positions subject

to union agreements. Employees with disabilities are 7% of state workforce. (20 ILCS 405/405-122; issued & rec'd Sept. 2017, 11 pp.)

## **Commerce and Economic Opportunity Dept.**

*Good Samaritan Energy Trust Fund annual report, 2017*

Fund solicits money to help low-income households buy energy; but total deposits were only \$25 in 2016. Its May 2017 balance was \$28,973. Recommends that Fund be abolished and money transferred to Supplemental Low-Income Energy Assistance Fund. (305 ILCS 22/35; issued & rec'd May 2017, 7 pp.)

*Illinois Film Office quarterly report, Oct.-Dec. 2016*

Estimates that 2,689 technical crew and 616 office, 421 talent, and 1,077 extra jobs were created or retained. Of the technical crew and office staff, 29% were non-white and 21% white females. Film production brought over \$72.2 million in spending to Illinois. Office will encourage educational opportunities for minorities to be trained for film and TV work. (35 ILCS 16/45(b); undated, rec'd May 2017, 2 pp.)

*Live Theater Tax Credit report, Oct.-Dec. 2016*

Over \$7.2 million in theater spending and 577 crew and production jobs were brought to Illinois. To increase diversity, Department will explore creating

educational opportunities for minority training in theater work. (35 ILCS 17/10-50(b); undated, rec'd May 2017, 2 pp.)

*Live Theater Tax Credit report, Jan.-March, 2017*

Credit did not create or retain any jobs or bring any theater production spending to Illinois. (35 ILCS 17/10-50(b); undated, rec'd May 2017, 1 p.)

*Live Theater Tax Credit report, April-June 2017*

The credit brought 300 technical and support jobs and \$5.2 million in theater spending to Illinois. Among hires, 62% were in protected classes. (35 ILCS 17/10-50(b); undated, rec'd Sept. 2017, 2 pp.)

## **Illinois Finance Authority**

*Qualified energy conservation bonds, 2016*

A total of \$91.7 million in qualified energy conservation bonds (QECBs) were issued, with a net allocation of \$42.1 million in QECB authority still available. Authority approved QECB issuance by 3 local governments since 2011, and reported a total of 11 QECB public offerings; all had closed by June 2016. Summarizes each local project using QECB money. (20 ILCS 3501/825-110(e); issued & rec'd June 2016, corrected Nov. 2017, 6 pp.)

## **Independent Tax Tribunal**

*Annual report, FY 2016*

The Tribunal was created as an impartial forum for taxpayers to litigate disputes with Dept. of Revenue; FY 2016 was its second full year. Of 270 cases opened, 178 were closed. Amounts involved totaled \$197.8 million. Says data will be more meaningful after Tribunal is open for several years and has handled more cases. (35 ILCS 1010/1-85(e); Aug. 2016, rec'd Aug. 2017, 3 pp.)

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*Bilingual employees report, 2017*  
The Tribunal had no bilingual employees. (5 ILCS 382/3-20; March 2017, rec'd April 2017, 1 p.)

### **Labor Relations Board**

*Illinois Police Training Act semiannual report, Jan.-June 2017*  
Board had no verified complaints, investigations, or officers decertified under the Act. (50 ILCS 705/6.1(r); issued & rec'd July 2017, 1 p.)

### **Legislative Audit Commission**

*Annual report, 2016*  
Commission reviewed 172 financial audits and compliance examinations; parts of 3 statewide single-audit reports; and 6 performance audits. It reviewed reports on 83 affidavits for emergency purchases totaling \$36.7 million; reviewed 7 awards not made to lowest bidders; recommended 5 new laws (enacted); and reviewed state agency travel control reports. (25 ILCS 150/3; undated, rec'd Aug. 2017, 29 pp. + 4 appendices)

### **Metropolitan Pier and Exposition Authority**

*Affirmative action plan, FY 2018*  
On June 30, 2017, Authority had 256 workers; 88 (34.4%) were minority group members and 47 (18.4%) were women (a person could be counted as both). Of 20 officials and administrators, 10 were minority and 11 female. Of 8 professionals, 4 were minority and 6 female. Of 15 administrative support and sale workers, 12 were minority and 10 female. Of 35 management-level skilled workers, 8 were minority and none female. Of 16 electricians, 3 were minority and 5 female. Of 122 other skilled workers, 32 were minority and 7 female. Of 40 service workers, 19 were minority and 8 female. (70 ILCS 210/23.1(a); issued & rec'd Aug. 2017, 8 pp. + 8 appendices)

### **Sports Facilities Authority**

*Annual report 2016*  
The Authority improved HVAC units, waste and vent piping, video surveillance equipment, and concrete, and added a 60-foot-high video board to Guaranteed Rate Field. In mid-2016, assets were \$428.1 million and liabilities \$458.8 million, for negative equity of around \$30.6 million. The hotel tax provided most revenues; the most spending was for bond interest. (70 ILCS 3205/18; undated, rec'd May 2016, 25 pp.)

### **State Fire Marshal**

*Bilingual employees report, 2017*  
The Office has 2 bilingual employees, each speaking Spanish. (5 ILCS 382/3-20; March 2017, rec'd April 2017, 5 pp.)

### **State Police Dept.**

*Juvenile charge report, Jan.-March 2017*  
Department received 8,936 juvenile charge reports: 612 ordinance violations; 340 petty offenses; 4,566 misdemeanors; 2,223 Class 1 to 4 felonies; 230 Class X felonies; and 14 murders; 951 were not identified. By gender, 6,960 were male and 1,976 were female. By race, 5,154 were African American; 2,186 white; 1,426 Hispanic; 92 Asian; 4 American Indian; and 74 unidentified. Also lists charges by county. (20 ILCS 2605/2605-355; April 2017, rec'd July 2017, 3 pp.)

*Juvenile charge report, April-June 2017*

Department received 8,446 juvenile charge reports, down 490 from 1st quarter: 557 ordinance violations; 309 petty offenses; 4,190 misdemeanors; 2,178 Class 1 to 4 felonies; 278 Class X felonies; and 20 murders; 914 were not identified. By gender,

6,504 were male and 1,936 were female; 6 were not identified. By race, 5,082 were African American; 2,064 white; 1,178 Hispanic; 57 Asian; 4 American Indian; and 61 unidentified. Also lists charges by county. (20 ILCS 2605/2605-355; issued & rec'd July 2017, 3 pp.)

### **State Universities Retirement System**

*Certification of required state contribution, FY 2017*  
SURS Board of Trustees certified \$1.67 billion as total required state contribution for FY 2017 based on 7.25% present investment return assumption. State Actuary found that SURS' actuarial assumptions are reasonable and no changes in June 30, 2015 valuation are needed. (40 ILCS 5/15-165; Jan. 2016, rec'd May 2016, 2 pp.)

### **Transportation Dept.**

*Proposed improvements to Illinois highways, FY 2017*  
IDOT will spend \$2.15 billion on construction and other road work, including 67 miles of Interstate highway repairs, 164 miles resurfaced, 6 miles of major construction, 217 miles of local projects, and 149 bridge improvements. Financing will be \$1.44 billion federal, \$482 million state, \$125 million from appropriations, and \$100 million local. Spending allocation is \$1.425 billion for state projects and \$723 million for local projects. Maps give details by district. (20 ILCS 2705/2705-200(b); undated, rec'd Oct. 2016, 142 pp. + tables, maps)



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## 2017-2018 Legislative Research Unit Interns



**Pictured: (left to right)** Ryan Lee, Rebecca Feddor, Payton Roberts, Madalyn Browning-Perry

## First Reading

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